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ABSTRACT

The California Achievement Test was given each Spring, 1981-1985, to all students in grades kindergarten through 11 in the Oklahoma City Public Schools. The results in reading and mathematics were interpreted in relation to: (1) national norms and point-in-time scores; (2) local students in the same grade in previous years; and (3) gain (or loss), among the same students, from one year to the next. Criterion-referenced reading and mathematics inventories were also administered in some of the grades to identify areas of strength and weakness. The overall trend for point-in-time scores was upward at most grade levels in both reading and mathematics, particularly in mathematics and after 1983-84 when the district instituted several new policies with specific achievement goals. For 1984-85 the median percentiles, compared to the national medians, were 48 for reading and 54 for mathematics. The percentage of students scoring at or above the national 50th percentiles in 1984-85 also increased from 48 to 49 percent in reading and from 52 to 55 percent in mathematics. In terms of normal curve equivalent score (NCE) gain, 1984-85 scores were lower than the previous year; nevertheless, over half the group showed progress equal to or greater than the national norm. (JGL)

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# District Testing Report

## 1984-1985

By
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June, 1985

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# Oklahoma City Public Schools District Testing Program

## Program Management

OCPS district testing activities are directed by a Steering Committee charged with the following responsibilities:

To ensure that testing provides information needed by individuals involved in instruction, and by those responsible for communicating with the public.

To prevent over-testing of students.

To ensure that tests are administered under the best possible conditions.

To expedite the transportation of test materials and results, and to maintain test security.

Advisory Committees at the elementary, fifth year, middle and high school levels provide input to this Steering Committee. Activities of all committees are coordinated by the Standardized Test Specialist. This individual also implements the testing program, serves as a resource person, aids in the selection of special purpose tests, provides inservice training for instructors and parents, and responds to test-related questions from the public.

A group testing schedule is approved by the Steering Committee and disseminated to building administrators prior to the beginning of each school year. Tests may not be added to the schedule without committee approval.

## Tests Used

Instruments currently being used are categorized according to specific purpose as follows:

**Achievement tests**

These instruments sample the curricular material which is expected to be presented at each grade level. Scores provide an opportunity for comparing individual and district progress with that of a group of students that is considered representative of students in the United States. The 1978 version of the California Achievement Test (CAT) published by CTB/McGraw Hill is administered in OCPS each Spring to grades kindergarten through eleven. It measures basic skills in pre-reading (for kindergarten), reading, spelling, language, mathematics, and reference skills. Results are used as a guide in modifying individual and group instructional programs and for reporting progress to parents, the Board of Education, and the general public.

Most students are expected to attempt the test, including learning disabled students and some whose primary language is not English. However, students are not required to complete a test if it is obvious that the effect of taking the test is overly frustrating or otherwise detrimental. Emotionally disturbed students, and educationally and physically handicapped students are not expected to participate, although some teachers choose to give these students experience in test-taking without the usual time limits. Consistent with the CAT norming sample, none of the above special group test results are included in the district report.

**Criterion referenced tests**

The Prescriptive Reading Inventory, Reading Systems (PRI/RS) is used in grades kindergarten through eight, and Diagnostic Mathematics Inventory, Mathematics Systems (DMI/MS) is used in grades five through eight. These instruments have a complimentary relationship to achievement tests. They make no assumptions about where a student ought to be, but identify actual areas of strength and weakness. Testing occurs as a part of the instructional setting to determine if material has been mastered, or needs to be reviewed or retaught.

**Individual diagnostic tests**

This type of testing is usually reserved for students with potential or identified problems related to learning, or for some students being considered for placement in the Promise Program for gifted and talented students. Tests are selected and administered by persons specially trained for individual testing and provide information for customizing instruction to particular needs.

**Supplemental tests**

These include state-required tests for placement of students entering the district, for screening young students for potential problems, and for inventorying career interests and aptitudes. Federally-funded projects sometimes require test results which are not already available as validation of program effectiveness.

## Use of Test Results

**Who sees test scores**

The results of all tests are made available to teachers and administrators who are responsible for using the results for instructional purposes and/or program planning. Results of achievement tests are also sent to parents in the form of Individual Test Profiles accompanied by a locally developed brochure explaining those results. In addition, parents may receive information about any test their child has taken by contacting the school attended.

**The dependability of test scores**

Scores are affected by many things, including a student's knowledge, skill, health, feelings about school, and feelings about home. But in general, the results of a standardized test provide a reliable estimate of a student's academic skills. Scores for large numbers of students are quite dependable and consistent over time. Because of the above-mentioned factors, however, an individual's score may show more than the "usual" amount of variation over time.

**Where test scores fit into the total picture of a student**

A test is but one part of the total picture of how a student is growing and maturing in school. Other attributes include attitude, classroom work, grades, test scores from other years, and use of free time. It is important for parents and teachers to interpret test results in relation to these other considerations.

## Obtaining and Reporting Test Results

### Scoring Systems Used

**California Achievement Test.** The EPIC-FAST Student Testing System for Educational Institutions, produced by IBM (1972), is used in conjunction with a National Computer Systems, Inc. scanning system to score achievement tests. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSSX) is used for further data analysis.

**Prescriptive Reading Inventory (PRI/RS) and Diagnostic Mathematics Inventory (DMI/MS).** A software package (TRACER) produced by CTB/McGraw Hill provides teachers with twenty four hour feedback after scoring of master tests from these two systems.

### Reports Produced

Achievement information is released each spring in the form of a District Testing Report. Once it is reviewed by district administrators and the Board of Education, it is available to all interested individuals. Each school receives scores for individual students and a grade by grade summary approximately three weeks after testing occurs. Additionally, a grade by grade needs assessment is developed for each school showing strengths and weaknesses in all the skill categories measured by the achievement test.

Because achievement test results are most generally of interest to the OCPS community and to other school districts, those data are included in a later section of this report.

An analysis of PRI and DMI data may be obtained through the Curriculum Department of the Oklahoma City Public Schools. Other types of test results are for use only by the individuals concerned.

### Testing Terms Used in This Report

**National Sample.** This is a group of students from across the United States who took a particular test at the time it was developed. It is not an ideal group but one that is considered representative of students, across a wide range of ability and aptitude, from all parts of the country.

**Percentile rank.** This score, indicates the percentage of students in the national sample who received the same or a lower score on the test. For example, if a student received a percentile score of 56, it means that he or she did as well as or better than 56% (56 out of 100) of the students in his or her grade in the national norming sample. Percentiles generally range from one to ninety-nine.

However, one feature of percentile ranks as they are assigned for the CAT is sometimes confusing. That is, in the lower grades (K-4), a percentile of 84 may represent a perfect score on one subtest while 99 may be perfect performance on another. A detailed explanation of the reason is beyond the scope of this discussion, but has to do with the fact that, in some of the early grades, subtests have relatively few items.

**Median percentile rank.** This represents the exact mid-point in a distribution of percentiles. In the national norming sample, the fiftieth percentile is the median and is therefore considered "average" performance.

**Normal Curve Equivalents.** These scores are similar to percentiles; they range from one to ninety-nine. However, they are equal interval scores (for example, the difference between 25 and 30 has the same meaning as the difference between 35 and 40) and unlike percentiles can be use in mathematical operations.

**Gain scores.** This is a simple difference in score from one year to the next for students having valid scores for two consecutive years. Investigation has shown that, for our purposes, this is preferable to more sophisticated methods of addressing change. Gains are calculated using Normal Curve Equivalent scores. A NCE gain of zero indicates progress equal to that of the national norming sample. Anything above zero indicates more progress and anything below zero indicates less progress.

## Achievement Test Results

During the 1984-85 school year nearly 34,000 students were tested with the California Achievement Test (CAT). Grades kindergarten through five were tested April 16-18, grades six through eight during April 23-25, and grades nine through eleven during April 30-May 2.

In this report, the data are presented from two different perspectives. First, **point-in-time scores** provide a status report of the achievement of this year's student OCPS population in relation to a national sample of students, and in relation to local students in the same grade during previous years Second, **gain scores** show the progress made by a sample of students who were present for two consecutive years. Each of these techniques makes a unique contribution to the description of OCPS student achievement. It should, however, be noted that the data are descriptive in nature and do not attempt to identify causal factors for the scores reported.

### Point-in-time Percentile Ranks

Point-in-time scores for different school years represent somewhat different populations. For example, eleventh graders one year are not tested the following year; kindergartners tested one year were not present the previous year. Additionally, there is considerable movement in and out of the district at all grade levels, and the same grade during different years is composed of different students. As the result of these occurrences, differences in point-in-time scores do not necessarily represent actual gains or losses made by students. However, they do give an accurate description of how our student population performed within any one school year.

### District median percentiles

The median percentile for OCPS indicates that exactly half of our students scored below that point and exactly half scored above it. When the median for OCPS students is higher than the national median of 50, this indicates that more than half of our students were above the national "average" score. Conversely, when the median for local students is lower than fifty, we know that fewer than half of our students reached the "average" score. Figure 1 shows median percentiles for five school years ending with the current one, 1984-85.

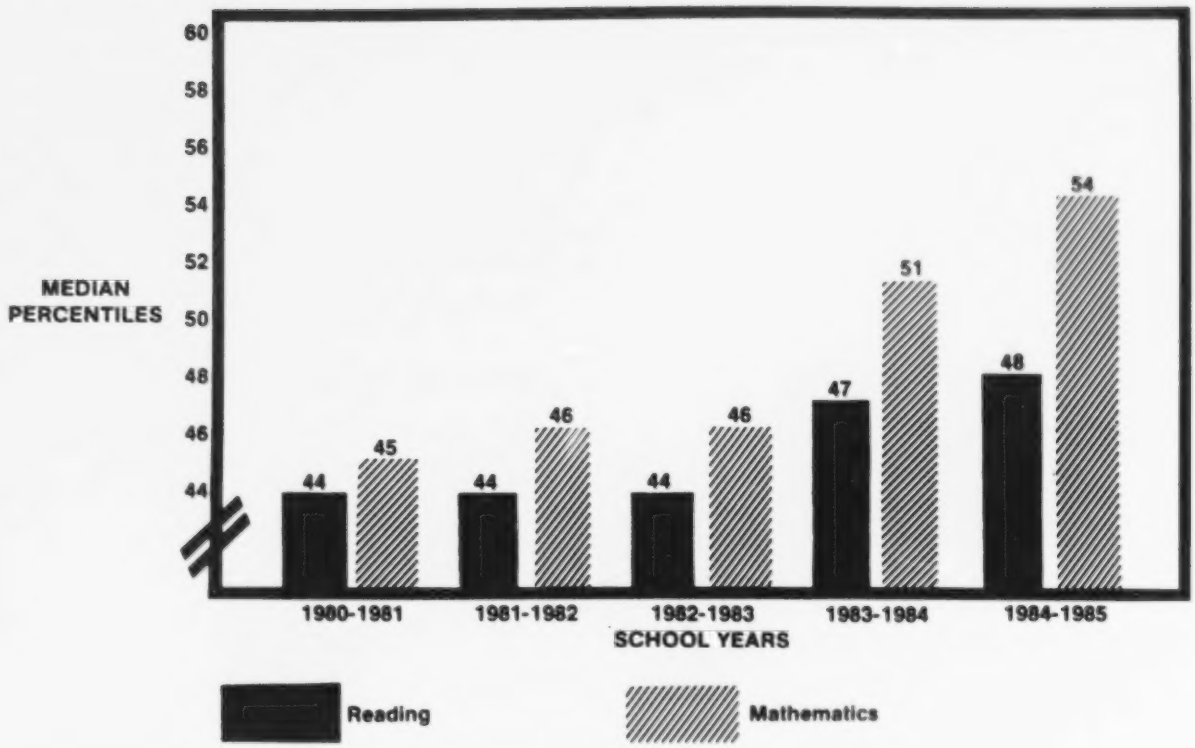


**Figure 1. Median percentiles for OCPS students from 1981 to 1985.**

As seen in Figure 1, the general trend for the district is one of improved scores over the years. Although Reading scores remained constant for several years, there was a notable change in the median score from 1982-1983 to 1983-1984 (44 to 47). In Mathematics, district medians increased gradually until 1983-1984 when the change was rather dramatic from 46 to 51. In 1984-1985 this improvement continued to 54.

**Median percentiles by grade level.** Table 1 shows median percentiles in **Reading** over the last five school years for grades kindergarten through eleven. There too, it can be seen that the general trend is one of improvement. The exceptions are some minor drops by grades kindergarten, three, five, seven and ten in 1982-83 and for grade six, seven, nine and eleven in 1980-81.

In 1983-1984, nine of the grades showed higher scores than the previous year, while three (grades 6, 10, and 11) remained the same. In the current year, 1984-1985, seven of the twelve grades (K, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10) had higher medians in Reading than the same grades in the previous year. Grades 1, 6, 7, and 11 remained the same, and grade nine was lower than the same grade the previous year.

Not surprisingly, the highest scores and greatest changes occurred in the early grades where instructional impact can be more readily demonstrated. But in general, all levels are showing improved performance.

## Table 1

**Oklahoma City Public Schools**
**California Achievement Test, Median Percentiles by Grade**
**Reading, 1981-1985**

| Grade | '80-'81 | '81-'82 | '82-'83 | '83-'84 | '84-'85 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| K | 39 | 47 | 45 | 55 | 58 |
| 1 | 52 | 52 | 55 | 64 | 64 |
| 2 | 44 | 45 | 46 | 50 | 51 |
| 3 | 42 | 44 | 43 | 46 | 48 |
| 4 | 45 | 45 | 47 | 48 | 49 |
| 5 | 44 | 44 | 43 | 45 | 48 |
| 6 | 42 | 41 | 42 | 42 | 42 |
| 7 | 45 | 44 | 43 | 45 | 45 |
| 8 | 41 | 42 | 44 | 46 | 48 |
| 9 | 42 | 38 | 39 | 43 | 41 |
| 10 | 36 | 38 | 37 | 37 | 39 |
| 11 | 39 | 36 | 37 | 37 | 37 |

Table 2, on page 7 documents generally higher achievement in **Mathematics**, at most grade levels over the years, than was seen in Reading. Rather dramatic improvement in scores has occurred in the last two years. This can be demonstrated by noting there were relatively minor drops for several grades (4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11) in 1981-1982 and for three grades (6, 9, and 11) in 1982-1983. However, in 1983-1984, ten of the twelve grades showed higher scores than the previous year. Two grades (K and 10) remained the same.

**In the current year, 1984-85 grades only K and 4 remained the same while all others had improved scores.** There too, the highest scores are observed in the early grades.

## Table 2

**Oklahoma City Public Schools**
**California Achievement Test, Median Percentiles By Grade**

**Mathematics 1981-1985**

| Grade | '80-'81 | '81-'82 | '82-'83 | '83-'84 | '84-'85 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| K | 55 | 55 | 55 | 55 | 55 |
| 1 | 61 | 61 | 63 | 69 | 72 |
| 2 | 48 | 49 | 53 | 58 | 61 |
| 3 | 44 | 44 | 47 | 53 | 57 |
| 4 | 47 | 46 | 47 | 53 | 53 |
| 5 | 39 | 39 | 40 | 47 | 51 |
| 6 | 43 | 42 | 41 | 47 | 49 |
| 7 | 44 | 43 | 43 | 48 | 51 |
| 8 | 45 | 44 | 45 | 50 | 52 |
| 9 | 41 | 39 | 38 | 39 | 42 |
| 10 | 40 | 41 | 41 | 41 | 42 |
| 11 | 41 | 38 | 35 | 38 | 39 |

**OCPS Board of Education Goals and Point-in-Time Scores**

**District goal 1983-1984.** In 1983-1984 several new programs and policies designed to facilitate student achievement were in place. These included specific Board of Education goals related to achievement, a criterion referenced teaching-testing program (PRI and DMI), a revised promotion-retention policy, a "C average" policy for eligibility for extra curricular activities, an assertive discipline program, and a more stringent grading system at the high school level.

That year, the local Board of Education goal for student achievement (for the first time) directed that, within three years at least fifty percent of OCPS students were expected to be at or above the national median (50th percentile) in Reading and in Mathematics on the district achievement test.

As shown in Figure 2 on Page 8, the Spring of 1984 achievment results revealed that 52 percent of students were at or above the national median in Mathematics (the percentage for the previous year was 46%). Thus, the goal was exceeded during the first year. In Reading, 48 percent were at or above the fiftieth percentile in the Spring 1984 data (an increase of three points over the previous year).

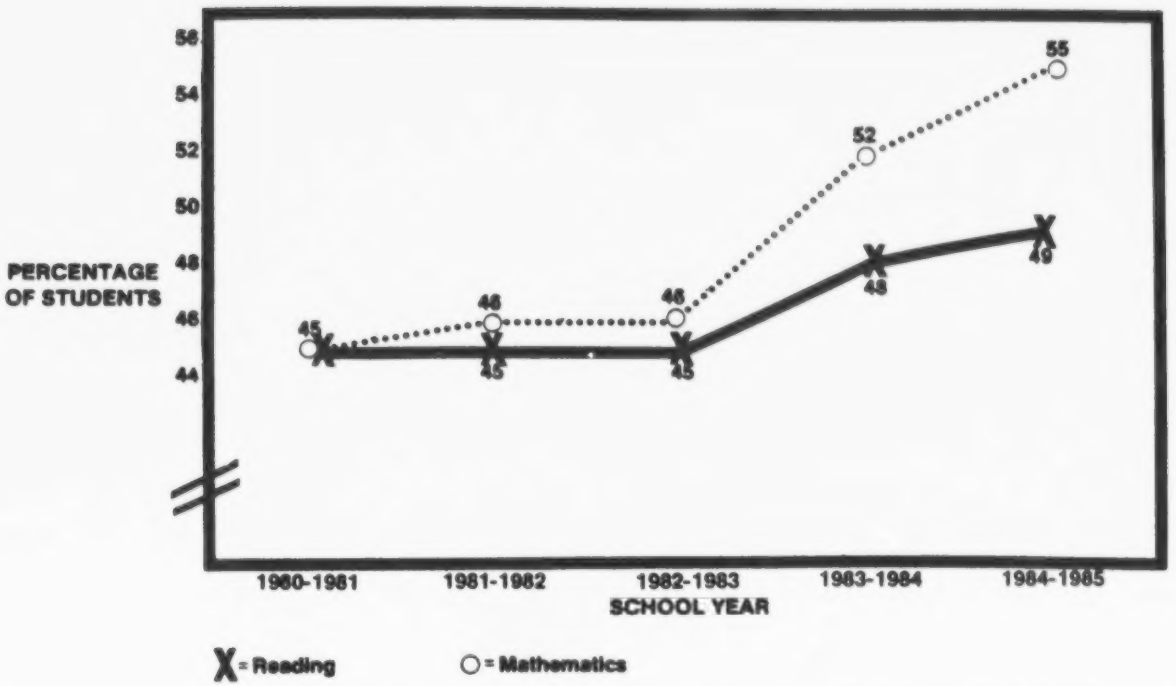


**Figure 2.** **Percentage of students scoring at or above the fiftieth percentile in Reading and Mathematics from 1981 to 1985.**

**District goal 1984-1985.** The first goal, having been exceeded in Mathematics and nearly met in Reading during 1983-1984 was revised for **1984-1985**. The new goal stated that by the end of the 1985-1986 school year, the median score for OCPS students would exceed the fiftieth percentile and once that level was reached, every grade level would continue to show increases.

The 1983-1984 goal had stated that **50% of students** would be at or above the national median. And as Figure 2 demonstrates, that the goal was exceeded in Mathematics (52%) and approached in Reading (48%) in 1983-1984. Further, in 1984-1985, only from a different perspective. It results in slightly different figures as is explicated below.

The **1984-1985** goal stated that the **median percentile** of OCPS students would exceed the fiftieth percentile. This goal addresses essentially the same thing as the percentage of students at or above the national median stated in 1983-1984, only from a different perspective. It results in slightly different figures as is explicated below.

The median percentile, as was noted earlier, is the point which divides any distribution in exactly half. For the national sample that point is 50. That mid-point is the standard against

which we compare our students. For example, the OCPS median percentile for Mathematics in 1984-1985 was 54 (Figure 1). In other words, essentially half of our students were below 54 and essentially half were above. That means that more than half (55%) of our students were at or above the national median of 50, and the goal that the median percentile for OCPS students would exceed the fiftieth percentile in 1984-1985 was exceeded.

In Reading, in 1984-1985 the OCPS median percentile was 48, with half of our students being above and half below. That comes short of the national median of 50, therefore fewer than half of our students (49%) were at or above the fiftieth percentile. However this performance exceeds that of the previous year when our median was 47.

As can be seen in the explanation above, Mathematics performance in 1984-1985 exceeded the board goal and progress was made in Reading.

**Grade level objectives**. In **1983-1984**, administrative objectives stated that grades kindergarten through four were to show a one point increase in median percentile each year. Grades five through eight were to show a two point increase, and grades nine through eleven were to show a three point increase. These objectives were repeated for the school year **1984-1985.**

Although not all grades increased by the expected number of points in 1983-1984 or in 1984-1985, (as can be seen in Tables 1 and 2 above), improvement was shown in most grades for both years over the same grade previously. The performance of the grades in 1984-1985 relative to the previous year is outlined below.

**OCPS Median Percentile In 1984-1985 Relative to 1983-1984**

| | Higher | Same | Lower |
|---|---|---|---|
| Reading | K,2,3,4,5,8,10 | 1,6,7,11 | 9 |
| Mathematics | 1,2,3,5,6,7,8,9,10,11 | K,4 | |

**Point-in-Time Summary**

The percentage of students scoring at or above the fiftieth percentile in Reading increased from 48% to 49% in 1984-85 while in Mathematics the percentage increased from 52% to 55%.

The overall trend in point-in-time scores is upward at most grade levels. In 1984-85, seven of the twelve grades had higher percentile ranks than the same grade during the previous year; four remained the same and one (grade 9) was lower. In Mathematics, all grades except K and 4 had higher scores than the same grade the year before; those two grades remained the same.

**Gain Scores**

It is important to remember that point-in-time scores and gain scores represent two entirely different concepts. A student's gain is defined as his or her NCE score in one year minus his or her NCE score for the previous year. Unlike point-in-time scores, the focus is on progress made by a matched sample of students from one school year to the next. These comparisons are "matched" because students had to have scores from two consecutive years. For example, to

have a gain score in 1984-1985, a student had to have a score for 1983-1984 and for 1984-1985. The student may or may not have been tested other years.

Figure 3 below shows NCE gains made by OCPS students relative to the norming sample for four consecutive years. An NCE gain of zero indicates progress equal to that of the national group. A gain of more than zero indicates more progress than the norm group, while a gain of less than zero indicates less progress.

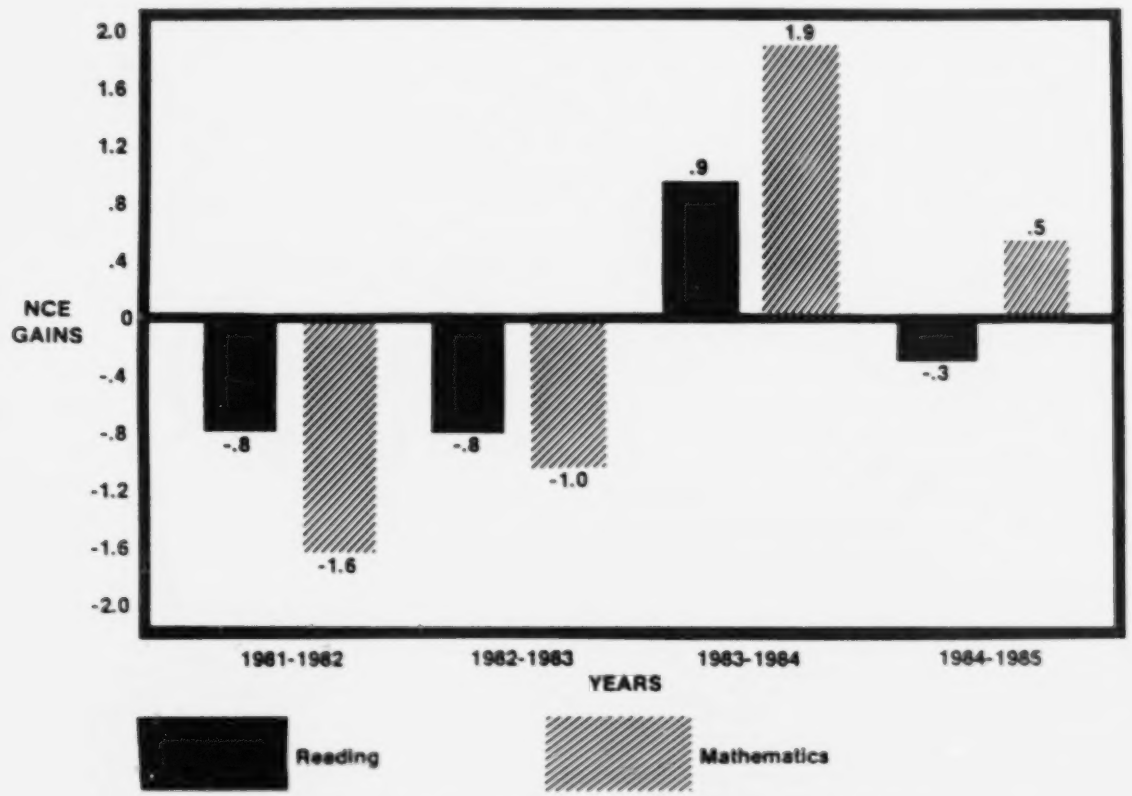


**Figure 3. Average NCE gains made by matched samples of OCPS students.**

Dramatically higher mean gains are seen for the 1983-1984 school year (Reading, +.9 and Mathematics, 1.9) than for earlier years. The gains for school year 1984-1985 are .5 in Mathematics and a negative gain of -.3 in Reading. It should be noted that these figures represent the average gain and can be somewhat influenced by a relatively few extremely high or extremely low scores.

As further aid to understanding the progress of our students, Table 3 below shows the percentage of students who showed as much or more progress as the norming sample. There we are addressing the actual proportions of our students who showed as much or more gain than the norming group.

## Table 3

**Percentage of OCPS Students Showing Progress Equal to or Greater than the Norming Sample Over a Four Year Interval**

**Reading and Mathematics**

| Subject | 1981-82 | 1982-83 | 1983-84 | 1984-85 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Reading | 50% | 49% | 54% | 51% |
| Mathematics | 46% | 48% | 58% | 53% |

In Table 3 above, it can be seen that in 1981-82 and in 1982-83, **50 percent or less** of students gained the same or more than the norming sample. However, in 1983-84 and in 1984-85, **more than 50 percent** of OCPS students showed gain equal to or greater than the norming sample. The change is substantial from 1982-83 to 1983-84. At that time, the percentage of students showing equal or more gain went from 49% to 54% for Reading and 48% to 58% for Mathematics. While that percentage dropped back down from 1983-84 to 1984-85 (to 51% for Reading and 53% for Mathematics), the data show that in the most recent academic years, a majority of the students made the expected progress or more in both Reading (51%) and Mathematics (53%).

This drop in the percentage of students who showed as much or more than the expected gain somewhat accounts for the lower average gain scores seen in Figure 3. It is also consistent with what we know about cognitive development. That is, whether one is observing individuals or groups, progress does not proceed at a perfectly steady pace. Following a year of dramatic growth one should not be surprised to find some tapering off.

**Gains by grade level.** Tables 4 and 5 display NCE gains by grade level. A number of the average gain scores are lower for the current school year than for the previous one, reflecting the trends described above.

## Table 4

**OCPS Grade Kindergarten through Eleven**
**Average NCE Gains in Reading, Over a Four Year Interval**

| Grade | 1981 to 1982 | 1982 to 1983 | 1983 to 1984 | 1984 to 1985 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | * | 3.0 | 7.6 | 5.2 |
| 2 | -6.6 | -7.2 | -2.0 | -5.2 |
| 3 | .2 | -.8 | .8 | -2.1 |
| 4 | 1.6 | -.2 | 1.3 | 1.6 |
| 5 | 1.4 | .9 | 2.0 | 1.8 |
| 6 | -1.5 | -2.2 | -1.3 | -2.6 |
| 7 | 1.3 | 1.3 | 1.5 | 1.3 |
| 8 | -2.1 | -.9 | .3 | .6 |
| 9 | -.7 | -.2 | -.9 | -1.8 |
| 10 | -2.3 | -2.3 | -2.0 | -2.6 |
| 11 | -.4 | -1.2 | -1.3 | -1.2 |

*Information not available

## Table 5

**OCPS Grade Kindergarten through Eleven**
**Average NCE Gains in Mathematics, Over a Four Year Interval**

| Grade | 1981 to 1982 | 1982 to 1983 | 1983 to 1984 | 1984 to 1985 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | * | 4.7 | 9.3 | 8.0 |
| 2 | -6.9 | -7.1 | -3.0 | -4.7 |
| 3 | -2.4 | -2.2 | 1.0 | -.8 |
| 4 | 1.0 | .7 | 3.2 | 2.0 |
| 5 | -3.0 | -2.3 | .8 | -1.0 |
| 6 | 1.7 | .2 | 2.7 | 1.0 |
| 7 | .1 | 0 | 4.1 | 2.7 |
| 8 | -.7 | -.7 | 2.7 | .6 |
| 9 | -3.0 | -2.5 | -1.6 | -2.4 |
| 10 | -.8 | -.2 | -.1 | -.1 |
| 11 | -3.0 | -2.5 | -1.9 | -1.7 |

*Information not available

As has been commented on in numerous other reports using CAT data, there are apparent large drops in scores from first to second grade. It has been hypothesized by CTB McGraw Hill personnel that this is because the first grade CAT is a mastery-type test (most children are able to master most of the material tested) while in grades two and up the CAT is a frustration-level test and students have not mastered all the material. This logic has been criticized. But regardless of the reason, the phenomenon has been observed by numerous users of CAT.

**Gain score summary.**

In terms of average gain, 1984-85 is perhaps best described as a leveling off year. In Reading, 51% of students showed as much or more progress than the norming sample compared with 54% last year. In Mathematics, 53% were at or above the normative sample in progress compared with 58% last year. But it is notable that better than half of our students showed the same or more gain than the national group.

**Achievement Summary**

The overall trend for point-in-time scores is upward at most grade levels in both Reading and Mathematics. The percentage of students scoring at or above the fiftieth percentile continues to increase. A substantial majority of OCPS students are beyond the fiftieth percentile in Mathematics.

The average gain score and the percentage of students making gain leveled off in 1984-85 from the previous year. However, more than fifty percent of our students showed as much or more gain than the national norming sample in both Reading and Mathematics.